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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SS-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DRL-02
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R 052215Z AUG 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7033
INFO NSC WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 002275

NSC FOR SALCEDO, AMB. MAISTO
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE
SUBJECT: POLITICAL UPDATE: AUGUST 2-5, 2002

SUMMARY

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1. IN THE AFTERMATH OF FRIDAY'S CHAOTIC VIOLENCE, FOR WHICH ELIAS SANTANA, DIOSDADO CABELLO, ALFREDO PENA AND PRESIDENT CHAVEZ PASSED THE BLAME LIKE A HOT POTATO, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ PROHIBITED THE METROPOLITAN POLICE FROM USING THEIR HELICOPTER. A GROUP CALLING ITSELF THE CARAPAICA REVOLUTIONARY GROUP CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY, IN A PRESS CONFERENCE, FOR THE SHOOTINGS IN THE 23 DE ENERO NEIGHBORHOOD. TO EXPRESS HIS CRITICISM OF THE SUPREME JUSTICE TRIBUNAL'S DECISION, RICHARD PENALVER IS ON A HUNGER STRIKE. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVE CARLOS TABLANTE SURVIVES HIS SECOND AMBUSH; FOR THE SECOND TIME HIS BODYGUARD IS NOT SO FORTUNATE. THE LAW OF DISARMAMENT PASSED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION'S SECOND READING.

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REVOLUTIONARY GROUP CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY FOR VIOLENCE

2. THE REVOLUTIONARY GROUP "CARAPAICA" PROCLAIMED ITSELF THE INITIATOR OF THE SHOOTINGS THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE 23 DE ENERO NEIGHBORHOOD OF WESTERN CARACAS ON AUGUST 2. THIS STATEMENT WAS MADE PUBLIC BY ITS LEADER, THE SO-CALLED COMMANDER MURACHI, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD YESTERDAY, AUGUST 4, IN 23 DE ENERO. HE SAID THAT HIS ORGANIZATION IS BASED ON MARXIST PRINCIPLES AND TAKES ITS NAME FROM THE INDIAN WHO FOUGHT ALONGSIDE GUAICAIPURO AGAINST SPANISH COLONIZATION. THOUGH THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES A "NEUTRAL AND PEACEFUL" ORGANIZATION, ALLIED NEITHER WITH CHAVISTAS NOR WITH THE OPPOSITION, THEY ARE WILLING TO DEFEND CHAVEZ'S POLITICAL PROJECT, A CONSTITUTION, AND THE WILL OF

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THE PEOPLE. THEY AFFIRM THAT THE GOV HAS LOST ITS AUTHORITY AS A GOVERNMENT. THEY URGED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES, WHO ARE FORMER MVR MEMBERS, ALBERTO JORDAN HERNANDEZ, ERNESTO ALVARENGA, ALEJANDRO ARMAS, CARLOS TAMAYO, JOSE LUIS FARIAS, AND PASTOR HEYDRA, TO REFLECT ON THEIR ATTITUDE, SINCE THEY WERE ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE BUT ARE NOT COMPLYING WITH THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. THE OPPOSITION WILL NOT BE ONE OF THEIR TARGETS, AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT STRAY FROM INSTITUTIONAL PATHS.

3. THOUGH MURACHI INSISTED THAT THE CARAPAICAS ARE NOT ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOV, THERE IS SPECULATION THAT CHAVEZ IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS EXISTENCE. JOSE LUIS FARIAS, ONE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES THREATENED BY THE CARAPAICAS, CLAIMS TO HAVE INFORMATION SUGGESTING THAT CHAVEZ FINANCES AND PROMOTES THEM. HE STATES THAT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO EXPLAIN THE GROUP'S POSSESSION OF DIFFICULT-TO-OBTAIN MILITARY WEAPONS. THE CARAPAICAS, WHO WEAR FACEMASKS AND SUNGLASSES WITH THEIR CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORMS, ARE HEAVILY ARMED.

NO MORE OVERFLIGHTS FOR PM

4. IN SUNDAY'S EPISODE OF "ALO PRESIDENTE," CHAVEZ PUBLICLY CRITICIZED THE ACTIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE (PM), PARTICULARLY THEIR DROPPING OF TEAR GAS FROM THEIR HELICOPTER, AS WELL AS PENA'S POLICIES OF "REPRESSION" DURING FRIDAY'S VIOLENCE. CHAVEZ DECREED THAT FROM THEN ON,

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THE PM WERE PROHIBITED FROM FLYING HELICOPTERS ABOVE
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CARACAS WITHOUT THE EXPLICIT PERMISSION OF THE NATIONAL
GUARD, WHOM HE PRAISED FOR THE FIRM, SERIOUS, AND
PROFESSIONAL WAY WITH WHICH THEY TOOK CONTROL OF THE CHAOS
ON FRIDAY.

OPPOSITION CALLS FOR CABELLO'S RESIGNATION

5. ELIAS SANTANA, LEADER OF THE DEMOCRATIC COORDINATING
COMMITTEE (DC), STATED THAT THE EVENTS AT 23 DE ENERO COULD
BE A PROVOCATION FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY TO LOSE CONTROL. HE
QUESTIONED THE FAILURE OF MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AND
JUSTICE DIOSDADO CABELLO TO APPLY THE SAME LEGAL
INSTRUMENTS TOWARDS THE VIOLENT MASSES OF THE PAST THREE
DAYS THAT HE USED TO PREVENT THE OPPOSITION MARCHES OF JULY
11 FROM REACHING MIRAFLORES. HE CALLED FOR CABELLO'S
RESIGNATION, AS WELL AS THAT OF FREDDY BERNAL, MAYOR OF THE
LIBERTADOR MUNICIPALITY. HE ALSO CALLED FOR A PEACEFUL
DEMONSTRATION FRIDAY EVENING.

PENALVER IS HUNGRY

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	G-00	SAS-00	/005W				

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6. RICHARD PENALVER, ONE OF LLAGUNO BRIDGE SHOOTERS OF
APRIL 11 BEING DETAINED FOR THE SECOND TIME, HAS DECLARED
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HIMSELF ON A HUNGER STRIKE SINCE WEDNESDAY JULY 31, IN
PROTEST OF THE DECISION BY THE SUPREME JUSTICE COURT (TSJ)
NOT TO TRY THE FOUR MILITARY OFFICERS ACCUSED OF REBELLION.
IN PENALVER'S OPINION, THE SAME ARGUMENTS JUSTIFYING HIS
DETAINMENT SHOULD BE USED ON THEM. HE BELIEVES THE TSJ IS
BEING PRESSURED BY OPPOSITION SECTORS TO RELEASE THE
MILITARY OFFICERS.

PROSECUTOR CALLS FOR DETENTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

7. ON AUGUST 1, THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR CALLED
FOR SIX METROPOLITAN POLICE OFFICERS TO BE DETAINED ON
CHARGES OF INVOLVEMENT IN HOMICIDES AND MISUSE OF WEAPONS
ON APRIL 11. PROSECUTOR DANILO ANDERSON, WHO ASKED THE
TRIBUNAL TO WARRANT MEASURES OF DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY
AGAINST THE SIX CHARGED, PRESENTED 98 FOLIOS PROVING THAT
THE POLICE OFFICERS USED M-16 RIFLES AND HK AND AR-15
MACHINE GUNS AGAINST PEOPLE ON THE LLAGUNO BRIDGE. THE
PROSECUTION SAID THAT AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE WERE KILLED, AND
EIGHT WERE INJURED, BY THESE POLICE OFFICERS.

PENA WILLING TO SACRIFICE INHERITANCE IN PM'S DEFENSE

8. ALFREDO PENA, ALCALDE MAYOR OF CARACAS, SHARPLY
CRITICIZED THE PROSECUTOR'S REQUEST, INSISTING THAT THE PM
HAD NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEATHS AND THAT THE
ACCUSATIONS ARE AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE THEIR INSTITUTION.
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HE PLEDGED TO FINANCE THE OFFICERS' DEFENSE ATTORNEYS WITH

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HIS OWN INHERITANCE, IF NECESSARY, AND SAID, "WE WILL NOT ABANDON THOSE WHO REGULARLY DEFENDED THE TELEVISION STATIONS, THE JOURNALISTS, AND THE PHOTOGRAPHERS FROM ATTACKS BY CHAVISTA CIRCLES."

TABLANTE SURVIVES SECONT ATTEMPT

9. YESTERDAY EVENING, AUGUST 4, CARLOS TABLANTE, AN REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE MAS PARTY, SURVIVED A SECOND AMBUSH AGAINST HIM. TABLANTE WAS ATTACKED IN VALENCIA, STATE OF CARABOBO, WHILE LEAVING HIS DAUGHTER'S HOME. THOUGH TABLANTE REMAINED UNSCATHED, ONE OF HIS BODYGUARDS, ROGELIO CALDERON, WAS SHOT FOUR TIMES AND DIED. THE BRIEFCASE IN TABLANTE'S CAR WAS STOLEN. THE BODYGUARD WAS ABLE TO INJURE TWO OF THE ASSAILANTS BEFORE FALLING, AND THEY WERE IDENTIFIED AS RICHARD LA CRUZ GONZALEZ AND HERDER JOSE COLINA ORTIZ, 23 AND 24-YEAR-OLD RESIDENTS OF THE STATE OF ARAGUA. THE FIRST AMBUSH ON TABLANTE TOOK PLACE ON APRIL 15, 2002, IN LA FLORIDA, CARACAS, AND ANOTHER BODYGUARD WAS KILLED, JUSTINO HERRERA. THAT TIME, TABLANTE WAS WORKING ON A PAPER TO BE PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THE NEXT DAY. TABLANTE IS EX-GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF CARABOBO, AND EX-PRESIDENT OF THE COMISION NACIONAL CONTRA EL USO INDEBIDO DE LAS DROGAS (CONACUID).

LAW OF DISARMAMENT APPROVED

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10. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (AN) APPROVED THE LAW OF DISARMAMENT ON AUGUST 2, IN A SPECIAL SESSION OF SECOND DISCUSSION. WILLIAM LARA, PRESIDENT OF THE AN, EMPHASIZED THE LEGAL IMPORTANCE OF THE LAW FOR DISARMING THE CIVIC POPULATION, IN ORDER TO REDUCE THREATS TO SECURITY. THE LAW PROHIBITS THE UNAUTHORIZED POSSESSION OF FIREARMS IN PUBLIC LOCATIONS, INCLUDING LOCALES WHERE ALCOHOL IS CONSUMED, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND RALLIES. PEOPLE VOLUNTARILY TURNING IN ILLEGAL FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION WILL BE REWARDED WITH AN AMOUNT OF MONEY TO BE DETERMINED BY THE CORRESPONDING AUTHORITY. THE COMPENSATION FUNDS WILL BE ALLOCATED TO THE BUDGET OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND JUSTICE.

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